# Depot Town Rag

Volume 21, Number 7

September 2008

We love our clip joints

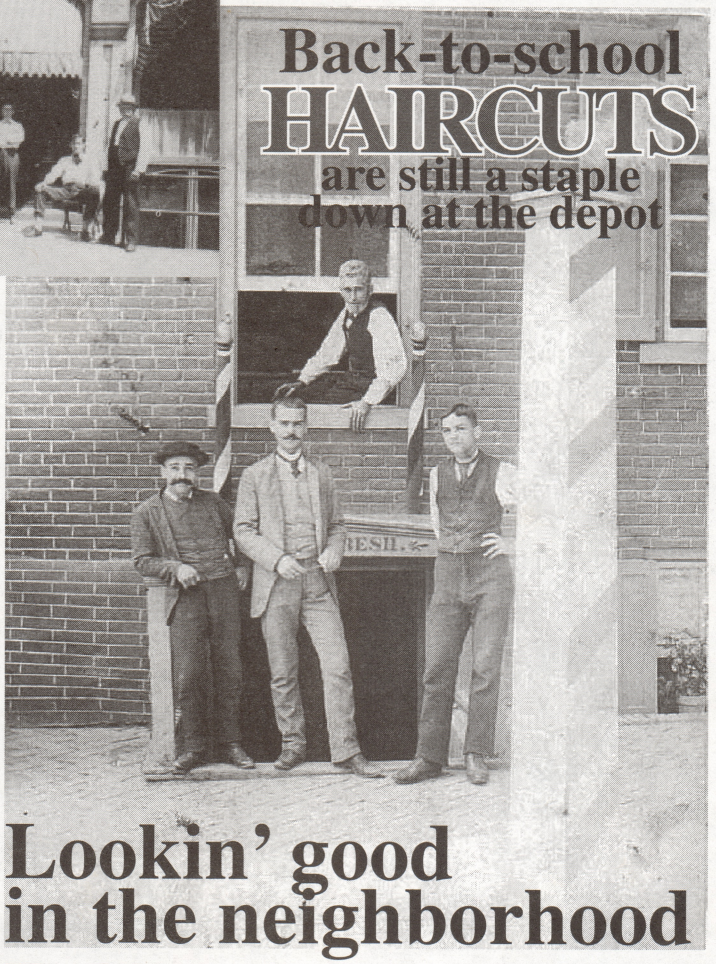
100% FREE *RAG* CONTENT

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

*Right: Six handsome patrons of a popular Ypsilanti barbershop*

*Far right: Similar dudes somewhere else. The short guy on the left is probably on his way IN for a moustache trim!*

## Back-to-school HAIRCUTS are still a staple down at the depot



# Lookin' good in the neighborhood

## Depot lingo went from "a full head of steam" (steam locomotive reference) to "a full head of hair" as our focus switched from trains to clientele

"Get down to the depot and get yourself cleaned up," was a common utterance in our history that seems just as popular in today's vernacular.

The railroad district was a neighborhood of working men and an important part of their routine was to get cleaned up and shaved before heading home for dinner after their work day. Gentlemen liked to come home sweet-smelling and smooth.

With the district's recently sanitized condition in this new millineum, women also come down to the block to get fixed up. With equality of the sexes, Depot Town denizens are among the fairest looking and sweetest smelling folks in the area.

*A print of Norman Rockwell's "Barbershop Quartet" sells for $90 on eBay today, but Rag Readers first saw it on the cover of the* Saturday Evening Post

## Headshops always flourish down at the depot

"Headshop" was the moniker assigned in the Sixties to a store that carried paraphernalia for "pot heads"—marijuana smokers who needed papers, bongs, and other accoutrements for alternatives to the licit drugs of the day. In the Seventies this block saw the Old Town Bazaar featuring some of the merchandise found in Chicago's tonier Old Town district, but drug-oriented stuff never had a market here. "People mostly wanted big black and white movie posters, clunky jewelry, paper Tiffany lamp shade knock-offs, and scented candles," remember Maxe and Terry Obermeyer, the Bazaar's owners.

The "headshop" label never carried over into "crack shops" or "speed shops." Down in Depot Town, "headshops" just meant a place to go for a haircut.

• Ike Rednour ran his barbershop in Depot Town for many years and his name is still carved into the bench in front of what is now "Paula's Barbershop." *[pages three & four]*

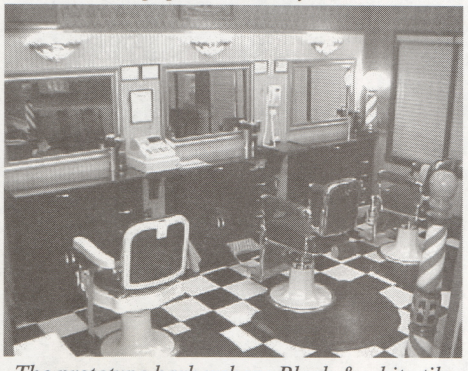
• Kathy Sorenson may have been the block's first full-time "lady barber" with more conversation than many men were accustomed to—and they loved it!

• In 1986 Linda Lister, opened her Depot Doo salon with a Marilyn Monroe theme.

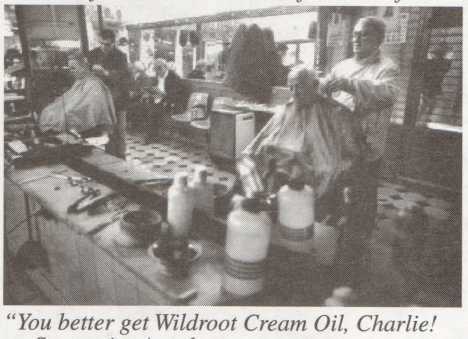
• Hair To Stay did great cuts for several years, but did not live up to their subtle name.

Today we enjoy a street-full of establishments devoted to making us look our very best: Paula's Barbershop, the Hair Station, the Creative Station, and Spa Burjon. They sure do keep us lookin' good.

*Every town's important stories are often told in the barbershops—before being told in newspapers or history books*



*The prototype barbershop: Black & white tile floor, white porcelian chairs upholstered in red leatherette, electric blue sterilizer box, and a dash of Wildroot Cream Oil for a nice finish.*



*"You better get Wildroot Cream Oil, Charlie!*
*Start using it today.*
*You'll find that you will have a tough time,*
*Charlie,*
*Keepin' all those girls away!"*

# Ike The Barber can recall shops back to 1910

*"IKE WAS HERE," says the carving on the bench in front of his old barbershop and here's proof that he still is!*

"Oscar Rednour" may not ring the rail crossing bells for folks who are new to the neighborhood, but everybody knows "Ike The Barber." Now retired, Ike still maintains a presence on the block.

Oscar (Ike) Rednour started barbering without a license. "My cousin had been a barber," he says, "and I just did what I had seen him do."

That was enough experience to keep him barbering when he served in the U.S. Army in Korea. He cut soldiers' hair there and no one ever asked to see a license. After the service, Ike went to Green's Barber College at Second Street and Michigan Avenue in Detroit. He graduated in April of 1954.

Ike's first barbering job in Ypsilanti was with Bob Scharp on Huron Street. Soon after, he opened his own shop down the street where he worked for a short time.

"Then I cut hair at Willow Run Airport until February 9, 1960." That's when he moved his clientele to Depot Town and cut hair here until his birthday on October 7, 1991.

Ike bought the shop from Roy Nelson who had been barbering in that location since 1955. Nelson had replaced Morgan DeVee who had cut hair there since 1910.

"The bar across the street was good for business," Ike remembers. "Guys would rather go out for a beer than wait their turn in the barbershop, so I told them to watch me through the front window and, when I started shaving a customer around the ears, that meant their turn was coming up. Some of them missed their turn, however."

Seventy-eight-year old Rednour remains retired, still lives on Railroad Street, and still spends some time on the bench where he carved his name in front of his former shop.

# Those old Burma-Shave slogans sure fit this block

*Replicas of Burma Shave signs appeared this summer in front of Haab's Restaurant on Michigan Avenue. From 1927 through 1963, some of those roadside ads for the popular shaving cream seemed to be written just for the barbershop customers on this block:*

TRAINS DON'T WANDER
ALL OVER THE MAP
'CAUSE NOBODY SITS
IN THE ENGINEER'S LAP
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AS THE TRAIN APPEARED
DEATH DIDN'T DRAFT HIM
HE VOLUNTEERED
Burma-Shave

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## The Hair Station
### 48 East Cross 485.8228

*Lynn Harden, seated. Left to right: Joyce Wilder, Melissa Hill, Joe Davis*

Richard Reid brought his Ann Arbor clientele with him when he bought the building at 46-50 East Cross Street and opened his new hair salon in 1991, Richard Reid's Hair Station. The front window gives one of the best views of the decaying MCRR depot and "station" seemed the right name for his venture. When Reid retired, Lynn Harden bought the business and changed the shop's name to better serve her. She had been cutting hair with Reid for twenty years, so they worked it out amicably.

All of Harden's staff come to this block with extensive background and experience and they continue to bring clients from Ann Arbor, EMU faculty, St. Joseph Hospital staff, and even walk-ins.

These professionals have been in the business long enough to see some dreadful fads come and go. They remember the Mullett, the Tail, bowl-cuts, and those delightful "mall bangs" that stood up and waved through layers of gel coat and sparkle.

This talented staff of professionals brings daily traffic to the street and their clients shop the block with great regularity.


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## Creation Station
### 18 East Cross 547.8953

*A pair of classics: Michelle Ciszewski's Aztec profile contrasts nicely with Cathy Britt's "American Girl" persona.*

History is important to folks down in Depot Town and the women at the Creation Station say they've been cutting hair "for a very long time."

Cathy Britt has been styling and coloring hair for twenty-six years, starting out in Ann Arbor and is celebrating her eighth year with Creation Station. Michelle Ciszewski says she's been in the business "since Detroit was a fort." She worked near the EMU campus for some time and says she treated "her kids like a housemother would."

The Creation Station celebrated their eighth year here in July and their loyal clientele looks forward to their continuing in the neighborhood.

Cathy styles the heads of countless professionals and Michelle applies her skills to many of the area's students and teachers. Cathy and Michelle look forward to meeting many new customers in the future.


It's harvest time!

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In historic Depot Town

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## Paula's Barbershop
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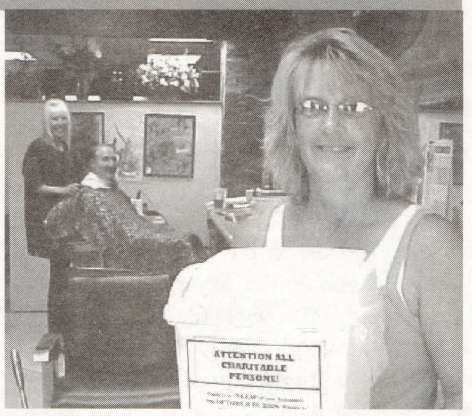


*Paula Filek in front; Sin der Ella at the back chair with a customer*

"Paula is in need of your assistance," says the poster on the side of a container in her shop. "On October 18, Paula is running 13.1 miles for the Leukemia Lymphoma Society in conjunction with the *Detroit Free Press* marathon. For this extraordinary fete of will and stamina, Paula needs to raise $1500 by September 13 or she will not be able to partake in this gift of giving to the needy."

With the backing of her friends and clients in Depot Town, Paula will run across the Ambassador Bridge and back through the Windsor Tunnel to raise funds for the Society. Stop in and dig in.

Paula Filek's barber chair may occupy the traditional owner's spot in the front window of her shop, but Sin Der Ella's chair at the back of this barbershop has become a shrine—at least to many rock 'n' roll fans.

Sin Der Ella has not only fashioned the tresses of countless glam-rockers, but she is an accomplished and well-known musician, herself.

*Sin Der Ella (left) in her after-hours costume with the band Madhouse*


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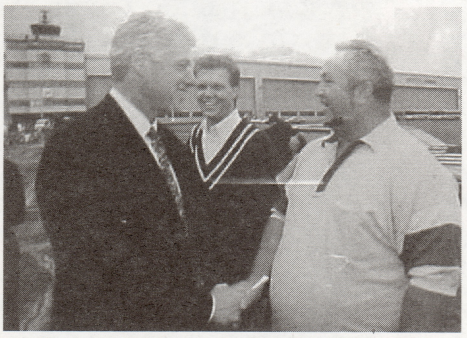
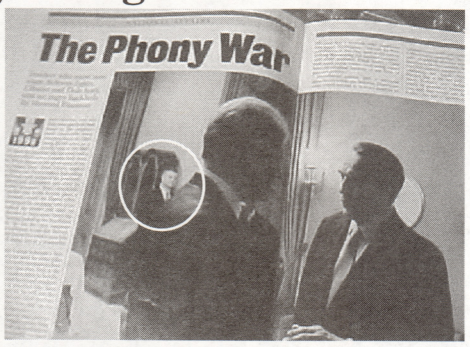
# Take-Boss-to-Lunch Day brought fame to block



*Richard Robine welcomes President Bill Clinton to Ypsilanti under the wing of Air Force One at Willow Run Airport (see Secret Service sharpshooters on the control tower)*




*Robine's nephew, Joseph Darrin Cameron, made* Newsweek *magazine (waaay in the back, over President's shoulder), March 24, 1996—along with Clinton and Bob Dole*

Joseph Darrin Cameron took his boss on a hometown tour to his old high school in Wayne and then made a stop in Ypsi. After the local stops, Cameron suggested they go for lunch in Depot Town on April 30, 2000. After lunch, Cameron stopped at Olde Towne Coin & Gold to give his uncle Richard Robine a hug. His boss hollered across the street, "Hiya, Uncle Richard!" They had met before when his plane landed at Willow Run Airport.

*The Robine family visited President Clinton's White House Oval Office in 1996*

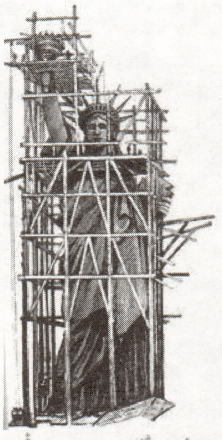
Cameron, Richard and Sharon Robine's nephew, served his country as President William Clinton's personal valet at the White House in Washington, D.C. When Clinton spoke at John Glenn High School and EMU's commencement that year, Cameron told him of a fine restaurant near his uncle's Olde Towne Coin & Gold shop.

There's a trophy case at "Uncle Richard's shop" just inside the front door to the left with lots more Clinton memorabilia: champagne from the inauguration, signed photos, Presidential M&Ms, fountain pens, and more news stories from related events. Just about anything that highlights Robine's nephew's experience in the Clinton White House is on display there.

Today, Cameron is head chef at a fancy hotel, Clinton is working on the Obama campaign, and the Robines are celebrating their 30th year in Depot Town. Stop in and help them continue making history.

## In the next Rag:

What might have been—novel ideas that never quite succeeded in our neighborhood: off-track betting, theme parks, hotels, gambling casinos, parking meters, two-way streets, city planning, et al.




# Depot Town Rag

A monthly publication of
the Depot Town Association, Inc.
400 Market Place, The Old Caboose
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198
**To the editor:**
thomasdodd@comcast.net


## Depot Town Association, Inc.

Gary McKeever, President
Merrill Guerra, Vice President
Andy French, Treasurer
Sandee French, Scy. & Past President
Website: www.depottown.org

## DTA Annual Meeting

6:30 p.m, Wednesday, 17 September,
Café Luwak, 42 East Cross Street.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*The trophy case at Olde Towne displays boxes of complimentary M&M candies with the Presidential seal and signature*

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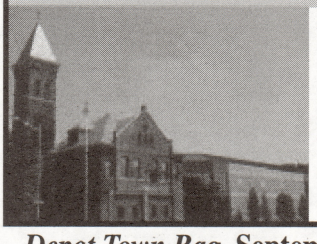

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# Shave and a history lesson: two bits!

There were barbers even before they built the depot in Ypsilanti. Razors have been found among relics of the Bronze Age (circa 3500 BC) in Egypt, and barbering is mentioned in the Bible by Ezekiel who said, "Now, son of man, take a sharp sword and use it as a barber's razor to shave your head and your beard." (5:1 NIV)

Shaving, either of the head or face, was not always a voluntary act, for it had been enforced by law in England and in some repressive high schools in the USA. Cleanliness and vanity were therefore not the sole reasons for a "clean shave"; the origins lie deeper. Before the Macedonian conquest brought the custom of clean shaving, the barber in the Greek *agora* would trim and style his patrons' beards, hair, and fingernails, as gossip and debate flowed freely. You can always find a good friendly argument in a barbershop.

Barbering was introduced to Rome from the Greek colonies in Sicily in 296 B.C. and barbershops quickly became popular centers for daily news and gossip. A morning visit to the *tonsor* became a part of the daily routine as important as the visit to the public baths, and a young man's first shave (*tonsura*) was an essential part of his coming-of-age ceremony.

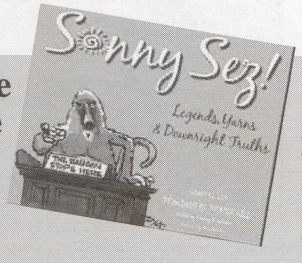
*An early Depot Town tonsorial parlor**

A few Roman *tonsores* became wealthy and influential, running shops that were favorite *loci publici* of high society; most were simple tradesmen, owning small storefronts or setting up their stool in the street and offering shaves for a mere *quadrans*. Some had reputations as clumsy butchers who left their patrons scarred about the cheeks and chin; their dull bronze or copper (never steel) razors must share some of the blame. The better barbers offered depilatories for those customers who refused the razor.

Barbers of former times were also surgeons and dentists. As well as haircutting, hairdressing, and shaving, barbers performed surgery, blood-letting, leeching, enemas, and the extraction of teeth. Thus they were called barber surgeons and they formed their first organization in 1094.

* *near the depot in Bucharest, Romania*

## How did the barber pole originate?



Sonny Eliot knows.

Not only did Sonny know more about the weather than today's "meteorologists," but Detroit's favorite weather forecaster for 35 years on WWJ-TV answers this question—and many others— in his book, *Sonny Sez! Legends, Yarns & Downright Truths*, by Sonny Eliot (illustrated by Draper Hill, foreword by Dick Guindon, Wayne State University Press, http://wsupress.wayne.edu, $14.95).

## Close Shave *-Sonny Eliot*

How did the barber pole originate? That's an easy one. The barber pole with spiral stripes is a relic of the days when barbers were also surgeons. As early as the fifth century, the barbers in Rome pulled teeth, treated wounds, and bled patients as part of their professional work. The barber-surgeons generally bled their patients in the arm, and, in the days when few people could read, pictures and emblems were used as shop signs. The emblem of the profession was a spirally painted white and red pole from which was suspended a brass basin with a semi-circular opening in the rim. The white represented the bandage used in bloodletting, the red stripe represented the blood, and the basin represented the vessel used to receive the blood. In the U.S. the brass basin is omitted from the barber pole, but it's still common in Britain. American barbers also added a blue stripe just to make the colors conform to our flag….

## -from Haircut *by Ring Lardner*

**". . . personally I don't mind much shavin' a dead person. They lay a whole lot stiller than live customers. The only thing is that you don't feel like talkin' to them and you get kind of lonesome."**

# A² Barber Pole Flap

Carl Thayer is one of the few remaining constables in southeastern Michigan. Aside from his regular duties in Pittsfield Township, 80-year old Thayer seems to be one of our leading storytellers. One tale he loves to tell is his fight with the City of Ann Arbor over his revolving barber pole.

*Carl Thayer*

Thayer had a barber pole on the front of his shop but City Hall didn't like it. For thirty-three years he was a barber in various places around A². His was a traditional shop with traditional décor––including the traditional barber pole. His barber pole was of the wall-mounted variety turning sedately and silently on the front façade of his shop on Stadium Boulevard.

"You can't do that," said the city attorney. He pointed out the ordinance against moving signs. Already the city had forced the removal of a downtown bank's sign that turned to show a clock on one side and a thermometer on the other. Thayer's barbershop was tougher than the bank. The barber pole stayed.

"It's not a sign," contended Thayer. "It doesn't say anything."

Several official letters were exchanged, but Thayer stuck to his shears and the pole stayed. "When I left the business to my partner in 1992, I told him the barber pole was his problem now."

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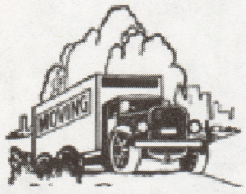



## District's street creds are changing:

Many Depot Town businesses will change locations on the block in the next few months:

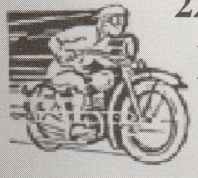
- **Nelson Amos Studio** is moving up the street to 23 East Cross
- **Photographer Mary Potts** brings her studio from Old Town Hall to 25 East Cross in the Gordon's Five & Dime space
- **Silver Spoon Antiques** moves to spaces inside Apple Annie's & Jim MacDonald's Antiques at 29 East Cross
- **RealKidz** moves its corporate offices to spaces above the Ypsilanti Food Co-op in the Millworks Building on River Street
- **Cheeky Monkey** closed their art glass and teddy bear shop at 33 East Cross at the end of August
- **Fantasy Attic** costume rental moves from Ann Arbor to spaces formerly housing Quinn's Essentials at 19 East Cross
- The Depot Town **Community Development Corporation (CDC)** opens an office in the Millworks Building
- ***The Depot Town Rag*** continues to publish from a local kitchen table

## RAGTIME Coming events

**6-11 September**
**Model T Centennial**
**Regional Tour**
*Downtown & Depot Town*

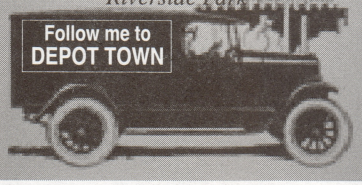
**14 September**
**Crossroads Music Festival**
*Downtown Washington Street*

**18 September**
**Final CRUISE NIGHT**
*of the season*



**22 September**
*The very last*
**MOTOR-CYCLE MANIA**
*of the season*

**4 October**
**Antique Truck Show**
*Riverside Park*




## A Depot Town sing-along:

## "It's Haircut Time"

*(from "Twilight Time" by The Platters amd dedicated to our block's great barbers)*

Unruly strands of hair are falling, into my eyes
Even my ears are covered now, I realize
When my head of hair starts in
looking just this way
I realize, my friends, it's haircut time.

Casual glances tell me when it's time to go
Wearing a cap to work will only prolong it, so
I count the moments, barber,
'til I'm in your chair
Together, again, at haircut time.

Here, in the your window chair today,
we keep our rendezvous in Depot Town
And, in spite of the habit of my ways,
you save me from despair...
...you cut my hair!

Deftly you trimmed so evenly
and cut and shaved
Doing your best to help me appear
civilized and behaved
Each time I say that I
won't wait this long again
Together, at last, at haircut time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